



HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL
AUSTRALIA

newsletter

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SPECIAL EDITION

Bushfire Response

Search and Rescue

Kangaroo Island is sometimes referred to as Australia's Galapagos because of its abundance of wildlife. So when flames engulfed 60% of the island's landmass during the massive summer bushfires, we knew the scale of destruction would require urgent, specialist assistance to help with wildlife rescues.

HSI's international disaster response experts (based in Washington) have been deployed across the world to carry out animal search and rescue operations during hurricanes, floods and earthquakes.

Since January, I have been one of five staff members from our Australian office that have been deployed in rotating teams to Kangaroo Island. We have scoured the scorched, silent landscapes for lone wildlife survivors amongst the charred remains of the dead.

Armed with binoculars, towels and laundry baskets (which work surprisingly well as animal carriers), we worked from dawn to dusk to rescue as many animals as possible. We also left water stations for animals that we could not rescue immediately, and camera traps to help us identify survivors needing rescue.

It is extremely rare to find koalas sitting on the ground and for the first few weeks that was all we saw. Dazed, confused and injured animals desperate for help.

Burnt, starving and dehydrated, countless koalas, wallabies, possums and even a bandicoot have been rescued and transported for emergency care at the vet station set up at the Kangaroo Island Wildlife Park. The triage station is staffed by incredible vets from the Kangaroo Island Vet Clinic, SAVEM, several zoos and the RSPCA, with invaluable support from the Australian Defence Force personnel.

To support the capacity of the park to deal with the sudden flood of patients, which is now in excess of 500 animals, HSI has already purchased the materials needed to build the new enclosures which were so desperately needed to house koalas on their road to recovery.

A lone koala (far left) sighted among the charred blue gum plantation weeks after the fires have torn through Kangaroo Island.
Image: HSI Australia.

Inset: To protect both rescuers and wildlife, laundry baskets are used to transport rescued koalas to the vet clinic.
Image: HSI Australia

Cover image: Adam Parascandola, HSI Global's Senior Director of Animal Protection and Crisis Response, deployed to Kangaroo Island to share his decades of experience in animal rescues around the world.
Image: HSI Australia



It's challenging physically and emotionally for the team and, sadly, not every rescue ended well. Our memories can never be fully shared or erased but we were able to cheer alongside the team at the Wildlife Park when patients were ready for the first stage of their release back to the wild.

Watching rescued koalas contentedly chomping down on fresh gum leaves made it all worthwhile. It spurs on our commitment to help with long-term wildlife recovery on the island.

As I write, the immediate bushfire crisis has passed, but we continue to face a starvation emergency as the animals are still in areas with little to no food. This means that koalas are now high in the treetops with absolutely nothing to eat. So our second stage of rescue required working with talented arborist Kai Wild and climber Freya Harvey to bring the koalas down and relocate them to areas of greenery after a vet check.

In addition, we are now working with an expert in infra-red drone surveillance who is mapping hot-spots of surviving koalas which makes their rescue much easier. We are also talking with experts and stakeholders to see what help is needed for the island's long-term recovery.

Erica Martin, CEO, HSI AUSTRALIA

Evan Quartermain (below), HSI Australia's Head of Programs, watches rescued koalas munch on gum leaves at the Kangaroo Island Wildlife Park enclosures.

Image: HSI Australia



Adam Parascandola, HSI Global, and Georgie Dolphin, HSI Australia's Animal Welfare Program Manager, were part of our second team deployed to Kangaroo Island.

Image: HSI Australia

Recovery and Release

Our network of 600+ wildlife carers and sanctuaries in the Wildlife Land Trust have had a heartbreaking summer. We have cried alongside too many who had properties in the path of fires that devastated rehabilitation facilities and years of habitat protection work.

With a huge influx of new arrivals to care for and many release sites damaged or destroyed, many wildlife carers are completely overwhelmed. Emergency evacuations, fire-related illnesses and the constant threat of more disaster has left many physically, emotionally and financially drained.

Kylie Hibberd is one such carer. When fires suddenly hit her town of Stanthorpe in south-east Queensland on Friday 6 September, she escaped with only five of her youngest kangaroo joeys and a bag of supplementary milk. Since then she has worked non-stop repairing enclosures on her sanctuary and caring for orphaned and sick kangaroos, possums, birds and lizards.

HSI's Wildlife Emergency Fund is providing support to wildlife carers in bushfire-impacted areas, like Kylie, who are working on the front lines to save native species. The Fund is also distributing grants to rescue and recovery groups and sanctuaries in these areas.

As of writing, more than 20 Wildlife Land Trust members were receiving support and we were assisting more than 50 carers, including six wildlife rescue groups, across fire-affected areas in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

With the overwhelming influx of animals suffering burn injuries and malnutrition needing care, and the lack of food and water for those who've survived, we're financing new enclosures, water tanks and irrigation systems to build capacity; assisting with ongoing costs like food, water and veterinarian supplies; providing intensive care units for newborn flying-fox pups and kangaroo joeys; urgent milk deliveries for burned wombat joeys; new rescue vehicles; and seedlings for habitat restoration. We have even bought



Inset: Erica Martin and Evan Quartermain have been visiting wildlife carers in fire-affected areas—including Donna Stepan from Sleepy Burrows, a Wildlife Land Trust sanctuary in the NSW Southern Tablelands.

Image: HSI Australia

Far left: Rose, the name given to this koala by our team, was one of hundreds rescued on Kangaroo Island.

Image: Meredith Lee/HSI Australia

a fruit chopping machine for carers to keep pace with a colony of hungry flying-foxes.

Our support also focuses on long-term protection and preparation. We are working closely with wildlife carers to develop shelters that house more patients and require less maintenance, so they will be well equipped to handle large-scale disaster events such as this year's fires.

We're also supplying water delivery and storage systems so properties and wildlife will be better able to handle heat, drought and fire events.

We have met with several carers to assess their needs and are currently doing major building work at Sleepy Burrows Wombat Sanctuary and Possumwood, which cares for 100+ kangaroos.

Right: Evan Quartermain and a wombat at Sleepy Burrows.
Image: HSI Australia



HSI is helping wildlife carers rehabilitate many young animals, including kangaroos (above), flying foxes (right) and wallabies (below). These orphans require months of dedicated care before being released into the wild.

Images: Sue and Steve Ross (above);
Tennille Bankes (right and below).



Humane Society International is a strong advocate for wildlife carers, recognising the vital role these dedicated people play in supporting native species through disasters.

Restoration and Protection

The bushfires have been catastrophic for conservation, with the federal government recently estimating that 113 species have lost at least 30% of their habitat and are assessed as requiring urgent management intervention.

Even before the fires, Australia's wildlife was hurtling head-long into an extinction crisis, driven by habitat loss and climate change. This summer has seen it expedited.

We have lost no time in working with partners and ecologists to nominate species now even more imperilled and needing upgraded endangered species protection. The koala and platypus are two high-profile species in need.

Our resolve is strengthened to win our campaign for laws that properly protect and recover nature. It is timely that our federal environmental legislation, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), is currently under review. This is a one-in-ten-year opportunity to improve our national environment law to ensure it is up to the task of preventing extinctions.

Expert in law reform, HSI is preparing a substantial submission for the independent reviewer to consider. It is time to rethink the legislation to ensure it strictly controls the cumulative threats facing our unique native wildlife and their habitats. To do this, we need strong leadership based on science not political interests. The business-as-usual approach we have been taking in recent decades will no longer suffice.

To have your say in calling for stronger laws to halt the extinction crisis and address the climate challenges facing our wildlife visit www.hsi.org.au

Calling wildlife carers in need

The fires may have gone but our help is here

Our heart aches for our Wildlife Land Trust members and wildlife carers who have lost everything in these bushfires.

We are here and ready to help those members and carers in need, please contact us: freecall number 1800 333 737 or by email to: admin@hsi.org.au



HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL
WILDLIFE LAND TRUST

ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

Callous cruelty condemns creatures to captivity

It is not only fires that snatch wildlife from us. Unscrupulous traffickers find their pay day stealing and selling wild animals into miserable lives in captivity.

It's a lucrative, multi-billion-dollar, global business in which Australia's unique and precious native animals are highly prized.

With wildlife treated as commodities with callous cruelty, it is both a massive conservation and animal welfare concern.



Hidden in tin cans and plastic bottles, taped up and stuffed inside suitcase linings, animals often suffer horrendous injuries or die—just the cost of business as far as the traffickers are concerned.

Australian laws need to keep pace with the criminals and their ingenuity, particularly those facilitated by the poorly regulated internet. For this reason, HSI commissioned the legal expertise of the Environmental Defenders Office to set out the law reform needed to combat wildlife trafficking to and from our country in a new report: *Next Generation: Best practice wildlife provisions in national law*.

The report includes recommendations to close loopholes and for the judiciary to impose much stronger penalties.

Meanwhile, the world is waking up to the human health risk of wildlife trade with the onset of the COVID-19 coronavirus traced back to a live wild animal market in China. There have been suggestions that the disease could have been spread by trade

in pangolins, an endangered species and the world's most trafficked mammal which is sought after for its scales and meat.

The wildlife trade is driving species to extinction, is unbelievably cruel and provides the perfect conditions for the spread of diseases.

HSI has been campaigning to persuade the Chinese authorities that the temporary suspension of wildlife trade across the country needs to become a permanent ban. We welcome China's announcement (24 February) that it will ban the buying and selling of wild animals for food.

This is their most decisive action in halting a trade implicated in the coronavirus crisis and one that causes immense suffering for innumerable animals.

HSI will follow the implementation and enforcement of the ban and work with local animal advocates on restricting other areas of wildlife consumption not covered by the announcement.

They even shoot the natives

Victoria's annual duck hunting season begins in early May, despite drought conditions putting enormous pressure on Australian waterbirds and their wetland habitats.

During the five-week season, eight native bird species will be declared 'game species', allowing hunters to shoot them with little regard for the birds' suffering.

The long-term declines in nearly all waterbird populations proves hunting has no role in the critical protection of these species.

HSI strongly opposes duck hunting, **an undeniably cruel and unsustainable activity** resulting in the prolonged, painful deaths

of hundreds of thousands of waterbirds every year.

This year we are joining many voices calling for a ban to this brutal sport, with strong hopes that the Victorian Government will act to protect our struggling native waterbirds.



Prolonged, painful deaths of hundreds of thousands of birds—every year

Rating would be shorn of value

Confusing for consumers, harmful to sheep

HSI objects to the Australian Wool Exchange's proposal for **two non-mulesed categories** on the National Wool Declaration.

This extra category would let sheep whose breeches (rear ends) have been modified using freeze branding, clips or intradermal injections to also be 'non-mulesed'.

'Non-mulesed' must remain as meaning sheep that have not been subjected to any form of breech modification. The Exchange's intention would confuse buyers and dilute the term.

Any breech modification comes with animal welfare concerns and consumers expect that 'non-mulesed' means that sheep have not suffered any interference to prevent flystrike.

Selective breeding produces sheep resistant to flystrike and has been proven the most effective, pain-free way for wool growers to end mulesing and prevent suffering, while attracting a market premium.

Help end painful mulesing, please visit our petition page at: hsi.org.au/mulesing

Queensland finally drops death sentence

Nine months after HSI won our court case, the Queensland Government finally agreed to end the culling of sharks in the Great Barrier Reef. Such killings risk the ecological viability of the Reef and are useless in preventing shark bites.

The announcement came as the Federal Government provided \$5million in support of moving to non-lethal shark control, including SMART drumline trials, rebates to councils for swimming enclosures, piloting drone surveillance and swimmer education.

New technologies and education are by far the best strategies to reduce the risk of shark bites so 60 years of needlessly killing them in the Great Barrier Marine Park now ceases.

We look to the Queensland Government to extend these more effective non-lethal shark controls to other areas.

To help us save sharks visit:
hsi.org.au/sharkfightingfund



Will see out her life in safety

The newest addition to the Field of Dreams run by our partners at Wildlife SOS is the beautiful Karma. **Blind in both eyes, she was rescued from life as a begging elephant on terrifyingly busy streets.**

Karma is now safe with a gentle caretaker guiding her in a new world.

Most street-rescues arrive wearing a bell, with carers waiting a few weeks, during acclimatisation, to remove them. Karma's may stay on longer.

Excitingly, we just heard that Karma has laid down for her first time—a sign she is accepting her surroundings while getting stronger and more confident.

Thank you for your support of elephants and making Karma's story possible.



Image: Wildlife SOS

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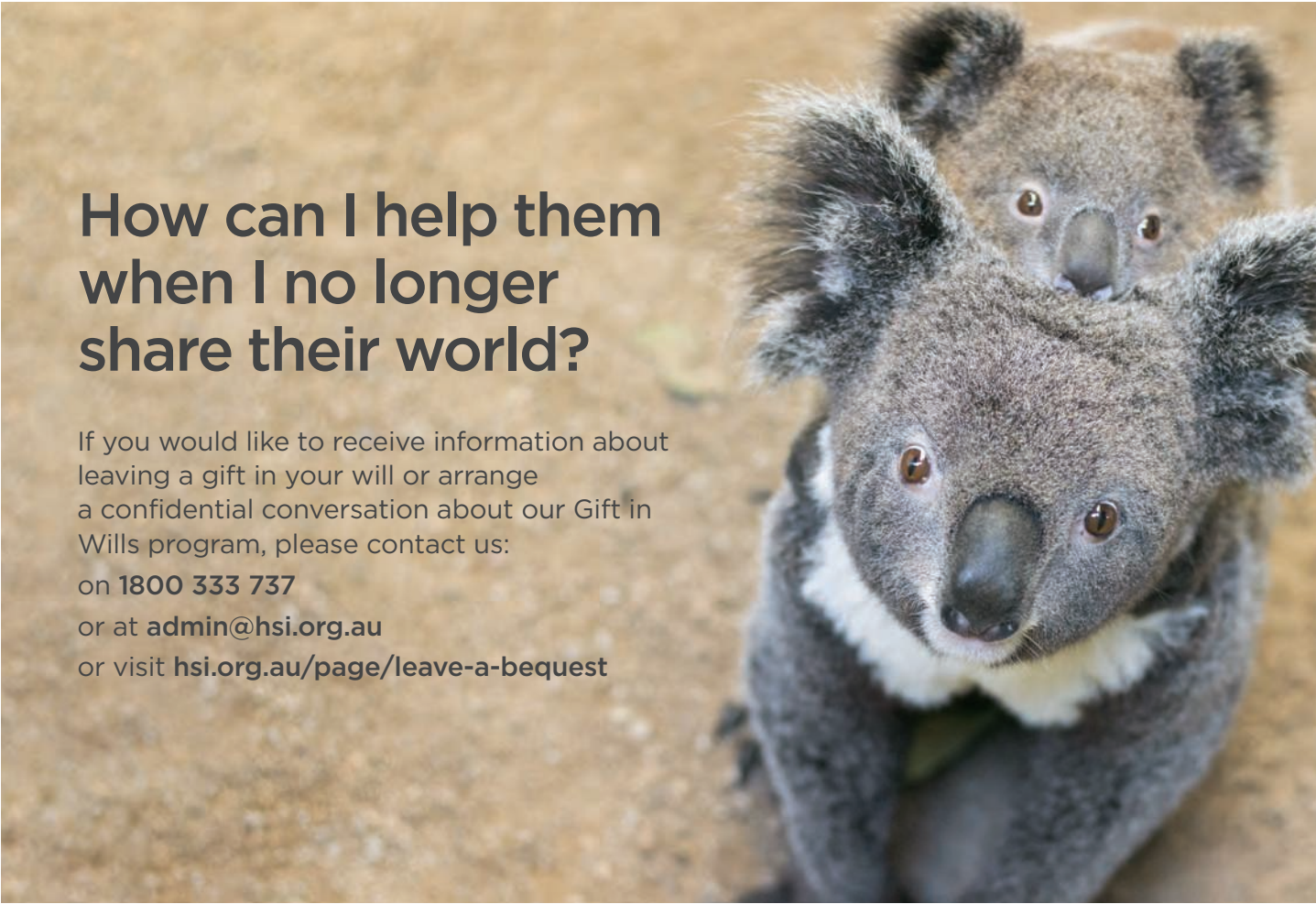
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We need a world where people treat animals and the environment with respect and compassion



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Humane Society International (HSI) is the largest and most effective international charity working for a more humane and sustainable world for animals.

We are leaders in saving endangered species and their habitats, while reducing cruelty in farming, trade and other industries.



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